



**Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD)
Full Scale Exercise (FSE)
Tulare, CA
September 6-8, 2011
ESF-11 After Action Report
(AAR)**



INCIDENT SUMMARY

APHIS Veterinary Services (VS) and California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) developed and conducted a FMD Table-Top Exercise (TTX) exercise on June 13th & 14th, 2011 to review existing response plans and electronic reporting systems with local, state, and federal partners. The TTX identified areas to assess in the (FSE) conducted on September 6-8, 2011. Over 100 individuals participated in the FSE, held at the Tulare Agricultural Center in Tulare County, California.

The forethought to have the STARTEX require travel the morning of the exercise to Tulare set the stage for a realistic response to an emergency. Travelling 1 – 6 hours to the Incident Command Post (ICP) and other exercise venues made for road-weary initial responders. An all-hands meeting occurred at 1300 Pacific Daylight Time (PDT) 9 on September 6th and afterward, personnel deployed to their assigned stations at the ICP, Cold Storage, Equipment & Supply Warehouse, Animal Handling/Decon, and the Diagnostic Lab. To provide responders with as many experiences as possible, eight (8) teams were assembled and each assigned a specific venue (e.g., ICP, Cold Storage, etc.) for each Operational Period (O-Period). A total of four (4) operational periods were scheduled over the three day exercise with incident briefs (Shift Change/Situational Awareness briefings) conducted at each close of shift. My evaluator assignment was at the ICP; therefore, this AAR will focus on observations at the ICP. An overall exercise AAR is being prepared by VS/CDFA.

A hotwash (review) for all participants was conducted immediately after the fourth and final operational period at 1200PDT on September 8th. The following are key issues observed with detail provided in the Exercise Evaluation Guide.

LESSONS LEARNED

Successful Area:

- (1) Use of Operations Action Tracker (ICS 233) provided the ICP a quick reference document. Access to the status of resource requests at a moments' notice was invaluable during team transitions.
- (2) Development and use of the California's Animal Health Emergency Management System (CAHEMS) Toolkit provided the ICP with an electronic database of ICS positions and their respective responsibilities. An excellent tool for "just in time" training.
- (3) IT set-up and operations were near perfect with computer networking, database access, printing, and Internet access all functioning flawlessly.

- (4) ICP facility and adjacent Ag Center facilities were demonstrated to be an excellent location for managing an incident. The facilities are conveniently located close to Highway 99, adjacent to a local airport, and fenced for security.
- (5) Exercise design of eight (8) individual Teams that rotated assignments for each operational period provided a thorough experience of roles & responsibilities at each location (e.g., ICP, Cold Storage, Animal Handling/Decon, etc.) in a short duration.

Improvement Area:

- (1) Lack of a Legislative & Public Affairs (LPA) or Public Information Officer (PIO) could result in a number of negative issues. Potential issues include: inability to provide the public with a unified, common message representative of all agencies, inability to manage public and political expectations, inability to address public health concerns.
- (2) Recommend the involvement of local emergency management agency to facilitate realistic coordination and resource requests from the local level to the State utilizing the required State's Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS).
- (3) Implementing security protocols at the ICP and other venues during the exercise would prevent public access and help avoid the unintended consequence of the public misinterpreting exercise activities as "real". Security protocols should include the phrase "This is an Exercise" or "Exercise, Exercise, Exercise" which were inconsistently used during the exercise.
- (4) Recommend the use of a projector during shift change briefings to convey situational awareness and scroll thru incident photos and information to create a more realistic atmosphere at the ICP.